

Salt Lake City Tribune

Seniors Find It Pays to Know Rights

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By Paul Rolly and JoAnn Jacobsen-Wells

When 74-year-old Penny Sweat was evicted from the HUD-subsidized Glendale Senior Housing in Salt Lake City last month, she moved to a nonsubsidized apartment at five times her previous rent because she was unaware of her rights.

It turns out the manager of the seniors complex, its attorneys and government overseers were unaware, too.

Lee Kemp, a hearing-impaired World War II disabled vet, also was evicted, but he contacted Utah Legal Services and was told to stay put.

Attorney Marty Blaustein then notified Utah Nonprofit Housing Corp., the building's owner, that Kemp's eviction was not legal and that he had a right to a hearing.

That didn't stop Utah Nonprofit Housing's attorneys from then sending Kemp a summons to show cause why he had not moved out.

Meanwhile, Sweat's granddaughter called Salt Lake City housing officials, federal housing officials, state officials and several agents of Utah Nonprofit Housing to find out about her grandmother's rights. Nobody knew.

Blaustein then took Sweat's case along with Kemp's and demanded her ousting be rectified.

Utah Nonprofit Housing President Marion Willey returned from an out-of-town trip and learned HUD procedures were not followed.

The eviction was activated because of ongoing personality conflicts among seniors in the complex, he said, and the new building manager decided the problems were with Sweat and Kemp.

Several tenants blame other neighbors as perpetrators of the rift, however.

Willey said when his building manager called attorneys retained by the company, they erroneously told her she could go ahead and kick out the tenants. When she called HUD to make sure, the inquiry got bogged down in bureaucracy and nobody called her back.

Willey says he has offered Sweat and Kemp apartments in another complex operated by his company at their old rates. He also is retaining new attorneys.